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SUBJECT: INCONSISTENCIES FORCE AGWAI TO CHANGE HIS UNAMID
PRIORITIES

REF: A. KHARTOUM 650

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur Force Commander Martin Luther Agwai lamented in a May 2 conversation with FieldOff that "inconsistencies are forcing me to change my priorities" with regard to UNAMID deployment, as articulated reftel. The most damaging of these inconsistencies from Agwai's perspective is UN Headquarters' preoccupation with numbers versus quality of incoming troops to the mission. Equally deleterious in Agwai's opinion is the current tendency of troop-contributing countries to pick and choose how and where to deploy. Agwai assessed that if the trend currently exhibited by the Egyptians and the Ethiopians on deployment of their second battalions continues, "then this mission will be ineffective." It may be too late to do anything about the Egyptian and Ethiopian deployment, but it is not too late to ensure that this practice does not happen again. We need to deliver the message to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that even if he refuses to listen to his DPKO advisers in New York, he cannot ignore his Force Commander on the ground. END SUMMARY.

"THERE ARE FACTORS BEYOND MY CONTROL"

2. (SBU) In a sobering two-hour meeting with FieldOff on May 2, United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Force Commander (FC) Agwai admitted that as much as he tried to stop them, inconsistencies in deployment expectations and practices were forcing him to re-evaluate his priorities for UNAMID deployment, as reported reftel. In particular Agwai singled out the focus by the UN, especially the Secretary-General (SYG), and the international community on quantity instead of "quality and capacities" for incoming troops to the mission. Agwai reiterated the message he delivered to the Security Council on April 22, that the focus should be on boosting the capacity of the ten existing UNAMID battalions and of the existing camps to accommodate them. He noted that current efforts seemed geared towards giving resources to additional battalions which, if brought in, would exceed the troop ceiling allowed under UNSCR 1769.

3. (SBU) Agwai also lamented the focus on the issue of self-sustainability of incoming troops. He noted that except for the current Nigerian battalion rotating (NIBATT 1), all previous UNAMID rotations in the recent past have been of AMIS troops, which, he pointed out, have never been and which are not now self-sustaining. "These inconsistencies," he stated, "are forcing me to change my priorities." The FC said he no longer knew what battalion was arriving when or at what force strength level. UNAMID's inability to receive 800-man battalions was due, in Agwai's estimation, to the absence of the Heavy Support Package of engineers and other assets meant to lay the groundwork for expanded battalions. "Where is the Dutch Level II hospital in El Fasher?" Agwai demanded. "And where is the Pakistani Level III hospital in Nyala?" [NOTE: These are both valid questions; the only talk of field hospitals has been of the incoming Nigerian Level II. END NOTE].

4. (SBU) FieldOff pointed out that Department of Field Support Under-Secretary-General Jane Holl Lute, even after her visit to Darfur, had herself been pushing numbers into Darfur, saying that she expected 15,000 troops on the ground by December 31. XQK&Q3 noted that Holl Lute "has always qualified this statement" and conditioned it on "many ifs" - namely, if there are air capabilities, if there is accommodation and if supply roads are maintained.

NUMBERS OBSESSION CAUSING BAD DECISIONS ON TCCS

5. (SBU) FC Agwai blamed the "numbers obsession" for SYG Ban's decision, against the advice of Department of Peacekeeping Operations Under-Secretary-General Guhenno, to accept a second Egyptian battalion for UNAMID. "I don't know what I am going to do with this battalion," Agwai admitted, since Egypt refuses to split it into companies to deploy to Shangil Tobaye and to Um Kadada, per Agwai's initial deployment plan, so it will now be XQ(Q){ flimsy promise that its forces would patrol to Silea. Agwai insisted there was "no way to change Ethiopia's mind" on this point, adding that all he could do in response was to remind the Ethiopian Defense Minister that the Ethiopian battalion would have an area of responsibility to dominate and that how it chose to do so would be up to the Commanding Officer.

6. (SBU) Agwai noted that Ethiopia also planned to send a Brigadier General with its battalion, based on the MOU it struck in New York with UN Headquarters. Agwai said that there was no place at the

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moment for this BG but that Ethiopia was content to let him idle in the mission until a job was created for him. He confided that a competition had already begun between Ethiopia and Egypt, given their relatively equal number of contributions to UNAMID, for slots as Sector Commander or for Chief of Staff. Because these two TCCs can produce enough troops (though of questionable quality) to satisfy New York's number obsession, they are deemed acceptable. Meanwhile Senegal has sent only quality troops, though not a great quantity of them, and will accordingly lose the battle for mission leadership. "If this practice continues," Agwai declared, "this mission will be ineffective."

17. (SBU) "My major concern," said Agwai, "is that other TCCs will now start picking and choosing where they want to deploy." He lamented that UNAMID military leadership lacked the freedom and autonomy to move troops to where it needs them, as was his experience under UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone. He explained that Force Generation in New York was too wedded to a classical troop-to-task model of peacekeeping to be able to provide UNAMID with the necessary mobility.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) It is a sad state of affairs when the commanding officer of a peacekeeping mission cannot have the last word on how to deploy the troops committed to his charge and when he is forced to change his mission priorities accordingly. Agwai has a proven track record in UN peacekeeping missions, as well as in the Nigerian armed forces, and he has a stated commitment to seeing through the bulk of UNAMID deployment (he told FieldOff that despite some second thoughts in late 2007, he has no plans to leave UNAMID before 2009).

Nonetheless, Agwai's decision-making authority is being usurped the SYG's political expediency considerations in New York. Agwai's hands are further tied by a Department of Field Support (DFS) that has been making promises it cannot keep since the Heavy Support Package. While we understand the need to support the SYG in getting boots on the ground, an equally important objective is ensuring that UNAMID is an effective peacekeeping force with quality troops in the right places. Post again suggests that USUN intercede to ensure that the SYG respects the Force Commander's ability to make military decisions and that the SYG does not make any more deals on TCCs that give them vetting rights over deployment options, per ref B recommendation. We must also take DFS to task on unanswered deployment questions, particularly with regard to outstanding enabling assets.

FERNANDEZ